

Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce
Evaluation Criteria for the 520 Bridge Replacement Project
September 18, 2009

The Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce is committed to advocating for successful statewide and regional solutions to our transportation challenges. Our region's future safety and economic health is fundamentally linked to an efficient transportation infrastructure system, and the ability to move people and goods must be maintained and enhanced if our region is to realistically compete for jobs. We believe that the SR 520 replacement project is essential to our region's economic vitality, and its significant risk of structural failure requires decisive leadership. This project has taken far too long to solve, and it is a top Chamber priority to play a constructive role in expediting any remaining process and decision-making so construction can begin as soon as possible.

Leading up to the draft EIS in the fall of 2006, the Chamber supported an expandable six-lane bridge with the Pacific Street Interchange. Last December, in response to questions posed by WSDOT at the end of the mediation process, the Chamber stated its support for option L with modifications. We believed that all three interchange options on the table (A,K and L) would preserve neighborhood livability and provide for SOV, HOV and freight capacity now and in the future. But, given the available information, alternative L seemed to best balance capacity, transit, community and economic considerations. In a word, we believed it could be a compromise solution.

Now, with a Legislative Work Group in place and a good-faith effort to make significant progress on the project this year, the Chamber has broadened its perspective and developed a set of criteria that can be used for evaluating any potential future alternative or hybrid option.

The Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce's key Evaluation Criteria for 520 are as follows:

- **Ensure Public Safety:** The safety of people and property in and around the 520 replacement is of paramount regional importance. The project's schedule should be expedited to replace the existing at-risk structure as quickly as possible. We believe consensus has been reached on major aspects of the replacement, including the expandable six-lane bridge and pontoon configuration, the Eastside work, the Foster Island area, the Portage Bay viaduct and the I-5 connection and lids. It is critical that we move ahead to the final design and construction of as many parts of the replacement as possible and avoid any further delay to replacing this deteriorating structure.
- **Enhance Mobility, Provide Congestion Relief and Build for the Future:** Safe and efficient movement of people, goods, and existing traffic should be prioritized during construction and throughout the life of the project. Impacts on freight mobility and adjacent corridors should be taken into account and the selected alternative should be part of an integrated mobility solution that includes dedicated lanes for transit and excellent transit connections, particularly at the Sound Transit University LINK light rail station. Widening of Montlake Boulevard North (a feature common to all three alternatives) and the inclusion of option K's 'keyhole' connection will improve access and travel times. Each of these improvements would help alleviate congestion and cut through traffic in the Westside neighborhoods. In turn, we believe that better throughput speeds and predictable and dependable transit service through the corridor will reduce green house gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled. The preferred design should also anticipate and allow for future capacity improvements.

- **Respect the Surrounding Community and Neighborhoods:** A replacement should provide a long-term return on investment and maintain the economic vitality of Seattle and its environs as both a job-center and livable city. A 520 replacement should enhance the urban environment, demonstrate environmental leadership and have a well-designed structural footprint. It should provide the best mix of traffic mitigation for Lake Washington and Montlake Boulevards, and it should improve connections to the north, including the University District, University Village and Seattle Childrens' Hospital.

The Chamber has strong concerns about the potential effect of any 520 replacement alternative on the University of Washington. The University is an economic engine in our region, and construction impacts will be considerable on the campus. Traffic impacts (particularly on Pacific Avenue), and implications for current and future land use must all be considered. Significant and reasonable mitigation measures for the UW—both during and after construction—should be at the forefront of public discourse as we move toward a preferred alternative.

- **Create Solutions that are Fiscally Responsible:** Any solution must make wise and efficient use of taxpayer dollars. The legislature has capped total costs at \$4.65 billion and has declared that tolls will be a significant piece of the funding. Any solution must live within these parameters, and must be permitable, technically feasible and designed and constructed without excessive risk. Ongoing maintenance costs such as energy and storm water management should be taken into account, and potential benefits should be considered as well, including infrastructure upgrade savings and increased property values.